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I am honored to have been a part of your Centennial celebration, to have taken this journey through our early and intertwined roots, and to have been able to share two perspectives with you which I feel need to be widely recognized and positively publicized.

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Ladies and Gentlemen of Cass, I thank you, I salute you, and I wish you the very best of good fortune in the next 100 years!

REMARKS BY JOHN A. LUKE  
CASS CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION  
MAY 26, 2000

Introduction

As I stand here with you today, I think back to the early days, 100 years ago, of West Virginia Pulp and Paper (now Westvaco) and the birth of this community of Cass. I think of our interwoven histories, our challenges, the accomplishments of the last Century, and of its people and their vision and determination.

I plan to try to capture that century in a capsule and then touch on two perspectives formed from that period and its forests. Each has an environmental basis, and each is terribly important today.

Looking back 100 years, we see the Lukes of that period with their mill up on the Potomac River, then 10 years old, and thriving with the technology they had developed to prove that pulp could be made

profitably from wood and driving the industry from one based on rags to one based on wood. This was of enormous importance to Westvaco, to the paper industry, and to the economy of the country.

The forests of West Virginia had been selected for this venture because of their vast stands of spruce, an ideal raw material for that early papermaking, even though it was a species already under heavy pressure from active and aggressive logging.

As that first mill grew, the company decided to expand with the construction of a second mill in Covington, Virginia, as well as ventures in Davis and Parsons. With this program prudence dictated an assured supply of spruce, and so, some 70,000 acres of timberland were purchased in this area to meet that emerging need. To log this land, a railroad which would eventually extend to 81 miles and the top of Cheat Mountain was built. And, to complement its pulpwood production, a double band sawmill was built at Leatherbark Creek to

produce finished lumber--and so, was born this community of Cass, named then for Joseph K. Cass, a Westvaco officer, an investor in the company, and member of the family from whom a mill in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, had just been purchased.

The Town of Cass and Westvaco flourished together for the next 30 years or so, until a couple of things happened. The spruce forests of the State had been harvested to virtual depletion, and the Great Depression hit.

No longer able to secure spruce in adequate quantity, Westvaco had to learn to make paper all over again—this time from the natural mix of local Appalachian hardwoods. As it conquered this challenge, the company retreated from the Cass area and concentrated on the lower cost, but technologically difficult, resource growing so abundantly and so close to its point of consumption. This meant that the Pocohantas County lands had become strategically less important in the 1940s and thus available for sale to Mower Lumber. Westvaco would rely on a

different source of fiber and put the capital invested in these lands to other uses. With the sale to Mower, Cass and Westvaco went their separate ways in search of their futures.

But, Westvaco was not to leave West Virginia as its mills at Luke and Covington continued to flourish and once again needed wood from further afield. It had been actively buying West Virginia wood on the open market for local mill delivery, but by the mid-1950s, it had again embarked on a land acquisition program which would lead to the 375,000 acres it now owns and manages so intensively in this State. To the casual observer, this might appear to have been a circular strategy on the company's part, but in fact, it was a wholly new and very different strategy—carefully conceived and carefully executed to support today's needs and tomorrow's. And so, here we are back together again 100 years later, as warm friends, and with each of us still traveling our own road, with Westvaco full of admiration for the creative and determined manner in which the wonderful people of

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Cass have faced and overcome their challenges in the very best of American tradition, and with Westvaco also in full admiration of the mighty forest resource in this area, even though it is a vastly different one than 100 years ago.

This very brief time capsule now brings forward the two environmental- and forest-based perspectives which I mentioned earlier and which I now want to share.

The first deals with the popular environmental ideal of Sustainable Forestry. In this country we have a large, diverse, and productive forest base. It is more vast and more productive than it was 100 years ago, and even 75 percent as large today as it was 400 years ago despite our enormous national growth in population and development over those years. Not only has the size of the nation's forest been stable for the last 100 years, but the volume of wood per acre has also

increased very substantially. In fact, wood is today growing 35 percent faster than it is being harvested.

This has all happened for a variety of reasons. Importantly, forest conversion to cropland leveled off in the 1920s, and forest fire loss has been reduced from levels approaching 50 million acres per year in the early 1900s to around 2 million today. Trees are being planted at astounding rates—some 400 or more for every child born in this country, and increasingly intensive forest management is demonstrating its enormous value. In short, our forests in America today are showing a remarkable recovery from earlier centuries when they contributed so much to our early development. Can we sustain the forest base that has and is contributing so much? Yes, WE CAN, and yes, WE ARE sustaining this dynamic and renewable resource. And that fact is more than amply demonstrated right here in this region as we look about at your magnificent forest today and reflect on the extraordinary contributions it has consistently made over its last

100 years. The same is true for the entire state of West Virginia. It may be hard to visualize, but most of West Virginia was severely harvested around the turn of the century. Yet today, the state sustains a vital part of the global forest industry along with a marvelous tourist industry based on its forests, water, and wildlife.

Lest anyone rest on any laurels, let me state emphatically that the job is far from done. Sustainable Forestry is essential for our nation's future needs and potentials, but sustainability doesn't mean just maintaining the status quo. It means assuring that healthy, dynamic forest ecosystems flourish in support of the needs of each new generation. While the national report on Sustainable Forestry is positive, there is far too little consistency in practiced sustainability across the country.

America is continuing to dedicate ever more forest land to limited use purposes, and a largely urban public opinion does not appreciate the



capacity of well-managed forests to meet the multiple objectives of clean water, vibrant wildlife, stimulating recreation and high quality forest products. And beyond limited use, our individually owned forests are becoming more fragmented in ownership every year as a result of tax and inheritance policies and from economic pressures to develop them. With fewer acres available each year, we need to manage highly productive and healthy forests that can sustain an ever higher demand for our nation's wood products. This means that we will have to learn to grow trees as fast, and as economically, as the best of our world competition. Brazil and Indonesia—and I do not mean their rainforests—are powerful examples of what is being done as they grow hardwood four times faster than our Appalachian hardwoods and pines twice to three times as fast as our most productive pine plantations. These cold facts go straight to the economic heart of the competitive strength of our forest resource, and the world market is uncompromising. Sustaining our forests through this century to meet the needs of the next requires that they not only

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problem. My objective today is not to debate Global Warming as fact or fiction, or as perilous or not. Rather, it is to dispel the notion that just because North America is a very large generator of carbon dioxide, that it must also be a very large contributor to CO<sub>2</sub> in the world's atmosphere and, therefore, Global Warming—NOT TRUE, based on work by scientists from Princeton, Columbia, and the Federal scientific agency known as NOAA, and which was published in the distinguished journal Science in 1998. These findings, little noted by the media, were based on comparisons of the level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere coming to our West Coast and the level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere leaving our East Coast on the wings of the prevailing wind flow across the continent. NO increase in CO<sub>2</sub> content in the atmosphere leaving our shores was found—ZERO contribution to the rest of the world. PERIOD. The study determined that North America is taking up all the CO<sub>2</sub> it is generating, while the rest of the world—primarily Eurasia and North Africa and, secondarily, the Tropics and Southern Hemisphere are releasing far more CO<sub>2</sub> than

they are taking up. whatever<sup>11</sup> growth there may be in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> comes from those regions, and it is so documented in Science.

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